

Town of New Canaan

Registrars of Voters

New Canaan, Ct. 06840

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Government, Administration and Elections Committee

March 25, 2013

Testimony in Partial Support of Raised Bill No. SB 4

AA Concerning Early Voting.

Senator Musto, Representative Jutila and Members of the GAE Committee, My name is George Cody, Registrar of voters in New Canaan. I would like to express qualified support for the concept behind this bill, but I feel there are a number of issues raised in the bill that warrant caution and further study or work prior to its passage.

The bill would allow for eight days of early voting conducted in a town hall or other municipal building, available to voters the entire time the municipal offices are open, with one evening session and one eight hour Saturday session. As I read the bill, it would appear to be limited to Municipal elections. The bill raises a number of questions:

- Eight days with evening and Saturday sessions works out to over sixty hours for towns open all day, five days a week. The bill calls for a Moderator and Election Officials as defined in Section 146, or five officials; a Moderator, a Ballot Clerk, a Checker, an Assistant Registrar, and a Tabulator Clerk. Municipalities must be given the time to adjust their election budgets accordingly.
- Since Municipalities in the state have different operating hours and days of operation, the bill would result in differing hours of voting in different municipalities.
- There may be a constitutional question as to early voting in general.
- The bill needs to define chain of custody issues such as security of the ballots and polling book lists between voting sessions.
- The eight days would also conflict with other election related deadlines such as in-office voter registration being conducted up to the Tuesday evening one week prior to the election. Unregistered voters would not be able to register or vote until Election Day, creating confusion. Polling books would have to be prepared for early voting before the office deadlines for registering.

At a minimum, we would like to see uniform hours across the state on a limited number of days, within a clear statutory process. The Committee will be hearing other suggestions and comments during these hearings. I am sure the Secretary of the State will have other suggestions for improving this legislation.

**Spoken
3/25/13**

As an aside, some towns such as Wilton allow more than one day for Referendums. The Republican Party in New Canaan, a few years ago allowed two or three early voting sessions for a Municipal Caucus. They allowed afternoon and evening sessions in addition to several hours on a Saturday.

Voting was by paper ballots, deposited in a sealed ballot box, which was kept, I believe, by the Town Committee Chair, and returned for each additional session. Voter check-off lists were then brought to the caucus and transposed onto the official caucus list. The popularity of early voting has been demonstrated in many states, using many different formats. The voters of Connecticut and most Registrars could embrace early voting if adopted in an orderly fashion.

In summation, with Election Day registration about to be instituted, and a vote on the constitutional amendment allowing no fault absentee voting headed for the ballot, we need to proceed with caution and due deliberation before instituting early voting as outlined in this bill. It would be best to evaluate the cost and effect to municipalities of Election Day registration and possibly extended use of absentee voting before adding the early voting process to the mix.

Thank you for your time, and I would be happy to answer any Questions you may have.